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AUTHOR Carr, Carolyn S.
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ABSTRACT

Verbal and nonverbal communication as an expression of political influence and power plays a major part in constructing and transmitting an androcentric bias in educational administration. This paper describes findings of a study that examined the form, meaning, and function of three female principals' verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors, and analyzes the salience of derived micropolitical strategies in work-related contexts for acquiring or using power. The case study was conducted in a public school district in a large southwestern city. Data were derived from observation of and interviews with three female principals--one from an elementary school, one from a middle school, and one from a high school. Findings indicate that the principals' verbal and nonverbal micropolitical communication behaviors differed from stereotypical "female" or "male" behaviors. The principals' communication styles were characterized by strong interpersonal relationships rather than interpersonal dominance; the use of environmental framing and ceremony as micropolitical strategies to mobilize support; promotion of the welfare of others; involvement with mentors; and use of language that reflects goals of persuasion, collaboration, consensus, and affiliation. Contains 66 references. (LMI)

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Carolyn S. Carr

University of Texas - Pan American

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Verbal and Nonverbal Micropolitical Communication of Female Principals

Male dominance in the structure of society has been well documented (Chodorow, 1980; Epstein, 1988; Kantor, 1977; Yanagisako & Collier, 1990). Educational administration is a career field which clearly exemplifies male domination (Shakeshaft, 1987; Sapiro, 1987), with women vastly outnumbered in leadership roles at all levels (Snyder, 1987). Verbal and nonverbal communication as an expression of political influence and power plays a major part in constructing and transmitting this androcentric bias (Thorne & Henley, 1975; Coates, 1987; Deaux & Major, 1990; Dierks-Stewart, 1980). Research on female micropolitical communication is sparse in the literature (Grady, 1991), as are attempts at an explanation of this phenomenon of imbalance. One area for investigation which may hold significant clues for understanding and potential change is the verbal and nonverbal micropolitical communication behaviors of female school administrators. This article examines the form, meaning, and function of three female principals' verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors and analyzes the salience of derived micropolitical strategies in work-related contexts for acquiring influence or using power.

Perspectives related to gender and language

Edelman (1984) distinguished between language of dominance and authority typically employed by males, and that of helpfulness and reinforcement used by women, a 'difference' often seen as 'inadequacy' by male standards. Feminists (Daly, 1978; Rich, 1979; Spender, 1980) described language as a reflection of a deeply patriarchal society resulting in the relative powerlessness of women. Increasingly, however, researchers have been asserting the variability and similarity between the stereotypic views of male and female cultures (Epstein, 1988; Randall, 1987; Schlegel,

1990) rather than the hierarchical views of male superiority described in early anthropological works such as those of Mead (1935). The attribution of gender has even been described as' relational,' rather than as an established 'essence' (Cameron, 1992).

Lakoff (1975, 1990) has given extensive examples of female features of verbal language form, meaning, and syntax. She describes usage of 'tag questions,' weak expletives, 'fluffy' adjectives, hedges, and personalisms. Female grammar has been described as more correct, polite, and tactful, and with fewer examples of humor than are found than in typical male conversation.

Nonverbal communication also has presented clues about ways female language is seen as powerless and docile. Listening, questioning, and opting for small personal boundaries are typical female behaviors indicating less power in relationship (Coates, 1987; Eakins & Eakins, 1978; Hall, 1966; Hoar, 1985; Mehrabian, 1972; Sayers, 1985; Tannen, 1990). Smiling (Halberstadt, Hayes, & Pike, 1984), touching (Dierks-Stewart, 1980; Henley, 1977), and greater eye contact (Exline, 1963; Henley, 1977) are similarly seen as powerless behaviors on the part of females.

Perspectives related to verbal and nonverbal behaviors and politics

Lakoff (1990) and Corcoran (1990) asserted the synonymous nature of language and politics. The use of language to achieve influence or power over others is a clear reflection of language as political activity (Morris, 1949; Lasswell, Leites, & Associates, 1949; Pfeffer, 1981). Feminist researchers have argued convincingly that language has reflected a deeply patriarchal society, that the 'theft of language' has been part of women's state of relative powerlessness (Daly, 1978; Spender, 1980).

Lakoff (1975) has described the components of language as form, meaning, and structure. 'Form' has included phonology, lexicon, and syntactic rules that specify

how words fit together to form grammatical sentences. "Meaning' has referred to the semantics of language. "Function' has referred to the intention of language, its pragmatics. Increasingly, however, language has been interpreted as including cultural norms of spoken interaction (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1983).

Nonverbal cues and conversational inference have also been part of the communication act, signaling how semantic content is to be understood, and how each idea relates to what precedes or follows in the conversation. Missed cues have led to misunderstandings and miscommunication (Coates, 1987; Dierks-Stewart, 1980; Gumperz, 1982; Mehrabian, 1981). Other nonverbal characteristics of women have been demonstrated in research through comparisons with men. Some of these are: preference for closer positioning during conversations and smaller personal space boundaries (Eakins & Eakins, 1978; Evans & Howard, 1973; Hall, 1966; Mehrabian, 1972), greater eye contact (Exline, 1963; Henley, 1977), more frequent smiling (Halberstadt, Hayes, & Pike, 1984), and more frequent touching (Dierks-Stewart, 1980; Henley, 1977). Such patterns of interpersonal relationship have helped establish and maintain power relationships in the micropolitical structure of social life (Hoar, 1985; Tannen, 1990; Thorne & Henley, 1975). Linguistic imbalance has therefore been considered worthy of study as a medium which spotlights real-world inequality. Corcoran (1990) has expanded this thought by positing that

> ...while language shapes and empowers its users, the unhappy consequence is that language reproduces and reinforces exploitation, inequality, and other traditions of power.... All language is political because every speech setting, however private and intimate, involves power relations, social roles, privileges and contested meanings (p. 53).

Power has been defined by some as energy, effective interaction, and

empowerment, a definition which departs from the view of power as domination and control (Thorne, Kramerae & Henley, 1983). Pfeffer (1981) asserted that "language and symbolism are important in t exercise of power" (p.184), in contrast to control of resources and interdependence which traditionally defined power. The extent of female political activity has largely depended upon the individual's sense of life space control and the salience of the political arena for that individual. The challenge for females has become transforming institutions based within the traditional organizational theories of dominance to allow a new vision which incorporates verbal and nonverbal behaviors which transform gender asymmetries. Ball (1987) identified such behavior as the interpersonal control style, emphasizing personal relationships and private persuasion as opposed to managerial and hierarchical styles, or political and adversarial styles. For females who achieve such styles, career choices would seem to expand.

Shakeshaft (1987) concluded in her research that most studies of women administrators have been conducted by survey, thus presenting a picture of the average, not the individual. Staley (1985) claimed the communicative potential of female professionals has been overlooked in the focus on general female communicative power. Women have brought knowledge of female as well as male culture to their jobs (Schaef, 1981), making their potential contributions to the workplace unique. Other studies demonstrated frequent use of informal styles (Pitner, 1981), need to be of service as opposed to seeking prestige and status (Neuse, 1978), and satisfaction derived from supervision rather than administrative tasks (Gross & Trask, 1964). Few studies have been conducted explicitly on female political behavior and micropolitics in school settings (Hoyle, 1986). Gronn's (1983) analysis of language use in management contexts in education has been one of the few field studies conducted in a natural setting. More research has been needed on what

characterizes in positive terms the women who have engaged in non-traditional, formerly 'male' roles, research requiring a look into the things that bring changes to society rather than a concern for the past or the status quo (Kelly & Boutilier, 1978).

> Linking politics and gender goes beyond the narrow constraints of sex differences research - asking only whether males and females do the same things or think the same thoughts, to an understanding of the historically flexible and context specific meanings of both politics and gender (Sapiro, 1987, p. 159).

Pfeffer (1981) brings focus to this idea with his suggestion that one aspect of stature, or power, which may be ascertained without great difficulty, is one's appearance, verbal skills, or articulateness. "Politics and the wielding of power are, after all, activities which involve argumentation, presentation, and debate" (Pfeffer, 1981, p. 132).

Micropolitics has been described as centered on the strategic use of power for the purpose of either influence or protection (Blase, 1989). Thorne and Henley (1975) described the micropolitical structure of every day details as patterns seen in both physical actions and verbal expression which establish, express, and maintain a power relationship. If indeed men and women have represented different political realities, then language has become a viable way of approaching understanding. Within organizations, language, symbols, rituals, and ceremonies have become fundamental in the process of establishing meaning for action and events (Pfeffer, 1981). Leaders who have utilized language to that end have acquired considerable power or influence. The following research describes the political language of female school principals with the goal of furthering the understanding of female micropolitical behavior in schools. Research questions were:

1. What are the verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors manifested by female school principals in their work related settings?

2. What are the micropolitical strategies employed by female school principals in their verbal and nonverbal communications?
3. What is the nature of micropolitical communication behaviors of female school principals?

Methodology

This multiple case study was a descriptive, qualitative field study of three female school principals, one from the elementary level, one from the middle school level, and one from the high school level, employed within one public school district in a large city in the southwest. The study was especially relevant in the state where it was conducted because only one percent of the school districts there employed a female administrator at each of the three public school levels: elementary, middle, and high school. Less than one percent of those same districts employed two females at each level. Even allowing for very small districts, this ratio of males to females is a dramatic example of male dominance in educational administration.

The objective of the study was to describe female principals' verbal and nonverbal micropolitical communication behaviors as observed in selected normal work settings. The processes observed included verbal and nonverbal interchanges between each principal and those with whom she came in contact during the course of her normal daily work. The specific events focused upon for each principal were: a faculty meeting conducted by the principal, a district principals' meeting , a teacher conference, a parent-teacher organization meeting, a parent conference, a student conference, a departmental meeting, and random informal hallway and office interchanges observed during the course of two typical working days. Informal interviews were held at the conclusion of each event to verify researcher impressions and check for understanding. An extended formally structured interview was

conducted with each subject at the conclusion of the observation period (Dexter, 1970). Data were collected over a two month period. All formal and informal observations and interviews were tape recorded and documented through field notes; departmental meetings and faculty meetings were video taped as well.

Components of verbal communication observed were form, meaning, and function as suggested by Lakoff (1990). Nonverbal communication components noted were such behaviors as posture, facial expression, body movements and positions, expressions such as vocal frequency and intensity, error or pauses, and subtly conveyed feelings (Mehrabian, 1972). Micropolitical communication behaviors or tactics (conscious or unconscious) noted were those interpreted by the researcher as conveying attempts to express formal or informal power or influence to obtain preferred outcomes. When these individual behaviors, or tactics, became patterns, they were described as strategies.

Data Analysis

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were achieved through prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation of data. Peer debriefing and member checks were employed, as was an audit trail consisting of field notes, activity logs, journal entries, audio and video recordings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and over nine hundred pages of audio tape transcriptions. During the course of the research, constant comparative analysis of the data was ongoing, open-ended, and inductive, as appropriate for qualitative studies (Blase, 1989; Glaser, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Patton, 1990). Transcripts were reviewed line by line, and an inclusive list was compiled of recurring examples of similar verbal communication behaviors, nonverbal communication behaviors, micropolitical tactics and overall strategies. These references were sorted repeatedly

into categories using the constant comparative analysis method until each category seemed unique, substantive, and related in pattern. A descriptive display matrix was designed to summarize and identify the specific dimensions of each category and allow comparisons. (See Tables 1 and 2.)

Individual case reports for each of the three subjects were prepared using data derived directly from the transcripts. The original research questions served as the guiding influence in establishing the broad categories and subcategories. Following the guidelines for grounded theory research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), all categories, themes and conceptual understandings which shaped the final descriptive and theoretical statements in the discussion and analysis were drawn inductively from the data and supported with illustrative excerpts. Excerpts from the transcripts were coded with page and line numbers in order to facilitate reference.

Findings

Verbal behavior

The verbal communication behaviors of these three principals (designated by A, B, and C) demonstrated many of the same characteristics. Categories of verbal behavior developed through analysis of the transcripts included active listening techniques, vocabulary, usage, and humor (see Table 1). Active listening behaviors of all three subjects included minimal responses such as 'um umm,' 'right,' 'okay,' 'yeah,' and 'uh huh.' These were commonly employed as prompts and seemed to encourage further communication from the speaker, rather than signify simple agreement with the speaker. The following interchange with Subject C was typical, and demonstrates this verbal behavior. This and all other transcriptions attempt to replicate actual speech and have not been edited for grammatical correctness.

273:19 Ada: Okay last year we we lost Barbara and we have Carla.

274:1 C: Right

274:2 Ada: Okay, so Carla filled Barbara's shoes and Barbara had a regular ED class also, so Carla/

274:3 C: /And student Council/

274:4 Ada: uhh, yes.

274:5 C: Okay.

274:6 Ada: Yeah, and she did have a student council period last year, I forgot about that. Umm, Okay so Carla just picked up one class there.

274:7 C: Right

274:8 Ada: Okay, I've lost one class

274:9 C: Okay

274:10 Ada: And then Dane has lost a section. Because she's she's doing two science when last year she did one.

274:11 C: um umm

(INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE.)

Use of vocabulary among the three principals reflected strongly positive connotations. Words such as 'great,' 'good,' 'wonderful,' 'excellent,' and 'super' dotted their communications liberally, sometimes in extensive strings as in this excerpt.

226:12 A: /Okay, great, okay, that's something we need to do today too is is to kindof brainstorm those kinds of things

226:13 Alice: And so that's kinda just a start and I /

226:14 A: /an idea/

226:15 Alice: /and I'm continuing to look at articles and stuff that have been written to see if I can come up with some more ideas.

226:16 A: Sounds great, super dooper, okay good.

Traditionally, women have been said to use colloquialisms far less than men in their conversation. This held true among these three principals, where only the high school principal used these commonly in her speech. She employed such examples as 'squared away,' 'hard core,' and 'down the road' frequently, sometimes more than once in the same verbal sequence. The other two principals used them rarely.

Qualifiers such as 'kind of,' 'just,' 'well,' and 'I guess' were distinguishing features of these principals' speech. All three used them, but with varying frequencies. The usage patterns of the principals varied to a greater degree than their vocabularies. The high school principal demonstrated a tendency to interrupt and finish others' sentences and used incomplete phrases frequently. Questioning techniques were used frequently by all three principals for the purpose of eliciting information, rather than in a solicitous manner as described in previous literature related to females.

Moreover, humor characterized the speech of all three principals, in contradiction of literature describing females as rarely using humor when compared to males. In the transcripts of her conversations, A demonstrated over fifty instances of humor in a variety of situations, such as this one with a slightly irritated mother who had been unable to locate her son.

238:9 Parent: I think so, the Lord willing I did it correctly, I asked Karl to meet me here, and of course he didn't show. He's in the hall somewhere, and I'm sure wherever that, she is, that's where he is.

238:10 A: You'll find him. Do you want us to go out and make an all call, (BOTH LAUGH)? He'd never speak to you or to us! (LAUGHS AS USHERS MOM OUT) Bye, see you tomorrow. (BACK TO DESK) Well okay, arighty.

With Subject B a similar use of humor occurred in her faculty meeting as she lamented the shortage of duplicating paper supplies.

80:8 B: Okay. (EYES DOWN, GRINNING AS SHE READS, RIGHT HAND UP WITH PENCIL) Number 3: Roses are red, violets are blue, paper is dwindling, what to do, what to do? (LAUGHS)

80:9 Librarian: And you thought we didn't have anything for the Pegasus contest! (LAUGHTER OF GROUP)

The following example of laughing at herself illustrated an embarrassing mistake regarding the misunderstanding of a title of a requested addition to the school's reading list. Subject C handled the incident with gracious good humor and considerable blushing at her own error. In deference to her power position as leader the teachers did not point out the principal's error until she herself realized it. The outcome was an opportunity for increased trust and collegiality, foundations for increased micropolitical influence.

327:12 Faye: A Quail Robert.

327:13 C: No, I didn't put that one on there.

327:14 Faye: That one I think is hard to get.

327:15 C: Well, you know why I didn't put that one on there? I thought it wasn't of lasting value. I thought it was more, not that Robert Quayle is not of lasting value, but that umm, there'll be a time that he won't be such an interesting figure. Right? Maybe?

327:16 Faye: I don't know. I haven't read the book.

327:17 C: Have you read the book?

327:18 Glenda: uh huh. (PAUSE)

327:19 C: Robert! Not Dan!

328:1 Faye: Not Dan! (SLIGHT LAUGH)

328:2 C: OH!! Wonderful, it just occurred to me! Well put it back on. Oh, I'm just so....Ohh!...

328:3 Faye: It's Okay.

328:3 C: (HIDES FACE IN HANDS, BLUSHES AND LAUGHS) I thought it was a book about the Vice President.

328:4 Faye: No, no.

328:5 C: I thought, oh, you know, that's going to be hard to justify...

328:6 Faye: Oh, that's cute! I love that! (ALL LAUGH)

328:7 C: It's gonna be hard to justify, and I didn't want to do anything political.

328:8 Glenda: No this is not political.

328:9 C: Alright!

328:10 Glenda: This is quite appropriate 6th grade material.

328:11 C: Goood!

****

328:16 C: Well I am not embarrassed, much!

328:17 Faye: Good, I'm so, it's so wonderful to know she's human!
ALL LAUGH AGAIN.

328:18 C: And you all were just being so nice about it!!

Nonverbal behavior

Nonverbally, all three principals demonstrated concern for their personal appearance as well as their environment: the appearance and arrangement of their offices. The ease of access to their offices and warm furnishings chosen promoted an atmosphere of collegiality (Pfeffer, 1992). They all utilized physical positioning

effectively as a conscious power tool. Each deliberately chose when to sit behind her desk and when to sit beside a visitor at a round table or in arm chairs.

Each principal employed body motions in communication. For example, each maintained consistent eye contact, reflected group moods through facial expression, and utilized expansive hand motions for emphasis and personal expression. Body position of the middle and high school principals demonstrated use of physical space in ways that were frequently more like stereotypical male behaviors. They casually placed an arm over the backs of their chairs and shifted their seating positions frequently. The elementary principal demonstrated a traditional closed body position, with arms close to the body. All three typically leaned toward or away from others as the topic met their approval or as their involvement in the conversation grew. Behaviors such as nodding, minimal responses, and smiling seemed to represent encouragement rather than submissive behaviors. Even interruptions, seen in the literature as powerful and dominating behaviors, served in a manner which appeared to encourage further conversation from companions rather than blocking it.

Strategies and Behaviors

Overall micropolitical strategies employed by all three principals were similar and included personal skills in organization, interpersonal influence, and advocacy of favored causes. Table 2 presents a display matrix of these observed categories of strategies and tactics. Subject A consciously utilized strong negotiation skills including confrontation to obtain her goals. Subjects B and C focused on framing an environment reflective of their personal values of caring for and supporting others.

(INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE.)

Micropolitical behaviors or tactics employed by the three principals in implementation of their strategies were also similar. The organizational strategy was

implemented by each principal through tactical behaviors such as planning, notetaking, and time management . Each prepared for and controlled meetings by having a printed agenda, but each also included on that agenda a time for each participant to speak concerns.

The principals' strategy of interpersonal influence was carried out through utilization of a team approach to management and personal involvement with teachers through ready accessibility and frequent offers to assist teachers in a variety of ways. The avoidance of any semblance of negativism was apparent in the behaviors of all three principals. Compliments and praise typified their comments to both staff and students. Each principal exhibited a strong sense of self awareness, including self confidence, dedication to her profession, and commitment to hard work. Each was gracious, poised, calm, and skilled in interpersonal relations. Networking within the community was a common tactic. Each espoused value for the uniqueness of the 'female contribution' to the principalship.

The interpersonal influence strategy was demonstrated repeatedly by all three principals through the tactics of consultation with teachers and parents, and sharing of information. Shared decision making was the norm. Each principal knew and called by name her entire faculty and many students. Each principal was also actively involved on her campus, participating in activities, walking around throughout the day observing events, and practices, and even participating in 'setting up' or 'cleaning up,' behaviors not usually associated with management level positions, as shown in this interchange with a parent volunteer group.

90:10 C: Well, what I would normally do is find out who is next door and then I would go walk through 8th grade lunch, (GOES TO OUTER OFFICE TO SEE SECRETARY ABOUT GROUP IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM.)

****

91:5 C: Okay. Thank you. And do you think they need anything?

91:6 Secretary: uh They were just happy to know they had the room until 12.

91:7 C: (LAUGHS- THEN SHE KNOCKS AND ENTERS THE ROOM) A room of workers? (ALL EXCHANGE HI'S ETC.) How are you?...Do you all need anything?

91:8 Parent: We're doing okay right now. We have our work cut out for us.

91:9 C: you do!

91:10 Parent: We're trying to people in slots where we think they'd be good and where they would like to be. It's challenging!

91:11 C: Ooooh, yeah!

91:12 Parent: We're we're making alot of progress and we have some things we feel real good about and some big unknowns.

91:13 C: Well, from what I've seen this year, matching is critical, and I think you always make some great matches so I/

91:14 Parent: / that's why it takes so long to do it!/

91:15 C: /It's probably worth all the...it probably is worth all the time ya'll are putting into it. It's a year's worth of...

91:16 Parent: Well, um umm, yes

91:17 C: but you don't need anything?

This interchange shows clearly the typical positive attitude and team approach common among these three subjects.

Subjects B and C adopted a strategy of framing an environmental context reflective of their value systems. Each displayed this strategy through symbolic tactical acts such as gift giving and ceremonies. C consistently referred to her personal philosophy of behavior and represented that philosophical approach to life in each of the groups with whom she worked in the school. Her leadership decisions promoted

the overall atmosphere she aimed to foster in her school. A clear example of the positive context within which she framed her approach to school administration was the habitual closing of her morning announcements.

28:1 C: ...And I remind us that we have been given this day for life and learning. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

A fourth strategy common to all three principals was advocacy of favored causes. Subject A saw herself as a change agent responding to the community value system. Each was an active and unabashed campaigner for causes of her choosing, as shown in advocacy of children and schools. Subjects A and C demonstrated this strategy in relation to gender issues through their tactic of mentoring aspiring female professionals. A expressed her view in this way:

12:6 A: I think my strategies I mean I've had an intern I think four different years. My basic belief is to just have em see and do everything. And very rarely has an intern been excluded from conferences or meetings or anything like that. And I think that's probably the best way to see what actually goes on, to be a part of it.

312:7 Why do you do it?

312:8 A: Why, oh, cause I like Alice (LAUGHS) because I feel like its important to be a mentor. And um and um I guess I had some that were men, but I guess recently they've all been women and I guess I feel like that's real important, cause I think we do things differently.

312:9 How?

312:10 A: I think we, well, at least, some of my initial principals I used to work with were good ole boy coaches, ex coaches and so they had a different style, it was kind of a bull in a china shop approach, and not very participatory, and I guess I'm a believer in participation you know in all elements and so uh I think probly women do more consensus building and umm we're not afraid of new ideas perhaps as much.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

With regard to the verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors of the three female principals, this study has shown a shift in typical female professionals. Both verbal and nonverbal communications of these three principals reflected more expansive and relaxed vocabularies and usage than found in studies of the past. For example, these three principals did not demonstrate the high inflection 'tag questions' or 'fluffy adjectives' described as typical female usage by Lakoff (1975). Though the nodding, smiling, questioning, and minimal responses described by the literature were present, as utilized by these three principals these seemed to reflect encouragement of others rather than the traditional view of submission to authority. Additionally, in two of the principals a definite break in the pattern of traditional physical movements associated with 'feminine' and 'masculine' was apparent.

The interpersonal influence strategy employed by all three principals was reflected in the tactic of strong involvement with coworkers on a personal level in addition to demonstration of professional expertise. As an apparent result, the hierarchical separation of management and worker seemed blurred in all three schools by the principals' accessibility and collegial approach to leadership. The schools' atmospheres were reflective of a team rather than a hierarchy, though the staffs did reflect respect for the positional power of the principals.

None of the principals saw herself as 'powerful,' though all would admit to having personal 'influence.' The aversion to usage of the word 'power' was not an unexpected finding in light of the literature related to early socialization of females. The negative connotations attributed to the word were described with the terms 'aggressive' and 'pushy,' though for Subjects A and C the latter were behaviors they admitted to having employed when necessary to achieve their organizational goals.

For these women, early socialization patterns made the term 'aggression' aversive when applied to their personal behaviors, but less negative when related to goals of their professional lives.

When asked about their micropolitical relationships with male educators, each principal had a different reaction. Interestingly, these reactions were reflective of various views found commonly in today's society. Subject A saw little difference in the current quality of interaction between professional males and females. She felt equally supported and comfortable within each group. She recalled earlier career experiences of ten to fifteen years in the past of being 'left out' of 'male' conversations in staff meetings, however. Subject B described male-female relationships in traditional language, appreciating stereotypic differences and their complimentary nature. She conceded that these differences might be more conflictual outside the profession of education, a field in which she saw men and women in a collegial relationship. Subject C described a pronounced gender gap and stressed the importance for women of careful and perceptive assessment of their professional relationships with men in order to avoid situations of micropolitical domination or manipulation.

Each principal felt keenly the pervasive and diverse political elements associated with her role in the community and had consciously adopted a personal style to confront such potential conflict. All of the principals saw open communication and interpersonal relationships and networking as the keys to their successful leadership styles. None felt she had significant problems communicating with others. In addition, all three demonstrated in their actions and expressed openly to others a concern for "doing the right thing" as opposed to "doing things right."

The findings of this research reveal a possible shift in the verbal and nonverbal micropolitical communication behaviors of female school principals in their work

settings away from traditionally described stereotypic 'female' behaviors. The traditional restrained and closed body positions, as well as the submissive verbal and nonverbal behaviors were diminished among these three principals to varying degrees. They had not adopted male behaviors entirely, but had relaxed the stereotypic closed female ones of two decades ago.

In addition, each of these principals utilized traditional 'female' behaviors in new ways. Formerly interpreted as submissive and signs of powerlessness, attentive listening and concurrent behaviors such as nodding, smiling, questioning, and minimal responses seem to have become powerful behaviors enabling the principals to prolong conversation, support others, and elicit further information. Strong interpersonal relationships, long described as typical of females and a source of weakness, were for these three principals a highly effective micropolitical strategy (Blase, 1989) enabling exchange and the reciprocity of team work, mutual decision making, and collegiality between the principals and their faculties and communities (Blau, 1964; Hoyle, 1986).

Ball (1987) described such behavior as the "preferred view of professionalism" (p. 91) and a tool for reducing confusion, resentment and dissatisfaction. The literature has long reflected the stabilizing effects of such mutual exchange and reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960; Homans, 1961). Blase (1989) described the levels of exchange as both tangible and intangible, with both substantive elements expressed in work, and symbolic elements finding expression in style. The environmental framing strategy of Subjects B and C was reflective of such a claim. The ceremonial aspects of Subject B's meetings were representative of this means of mobilizing support and perhaps quieting current or potential opposition (Pfeffer, 1992).

These three principals also exhibited a proactive strategic approach to leadership through conscious tactics of networking and advocacy of causes reflective

of their values. These values did not reflect a personal quest for power, but a motivation based in concern for the welfare of others, especially the children in their charge. This finding was reflective of Marshall's (1992) research of atypical leaders, and her resulting claim that with such "values guiding the flow of action, schools could be more human, fair, equitable places" (p. 383). More philosophically, their approach to micropolitical influence reflected Vaclav Havel's (1992) claim that

> ...if there is to be any chance at all of success, there is only one way to strive for decency, reason, responsibility, sincerity, civility, and tolerance, and that is decently, reasonably, responsibly, sincerely, civilly, and tolerantly (p. 8).

Further empirical investigation of the findings of this research related to female principals' micropolitical communication could inform practice and training of both female and male administrators and should be conducted. General theoretical propositions drawn from this research include the following:

1. Micropolitical influence of female principals is expressed through verbal and nonverbal language differing from traditional stereotypic female or male language.
2. Strong interpersonal relationships rather than interpersonal dominance form the basis of effective micropolitical leadership strategies for female principals where dissensus exists.
3. Female principals utilize environmental framing and ceremony as micropolitical strategies for mobilizing support and quieting opposition.
4. Female principals utilize micropolitical influence to promote the welfare of others rather than to promote their own personal power.
5. Female principals are likely to be involved with others as mentors or as

advocates of causes reflective of their own values.

6. Female principals' verbal and nonverbal language reflects predominate goals of persuasion, collaboration, consensus, and affiliation rather than confrontation, coercion, or threat.

Implications for Practice

Because schools as organizations are becoming increasingly politicized as a result of demands on scarce resources, and communities reflect a more heterogeneous society (Pfeffer,1981), school administrators have become a key element in implementation of positive change.

> Where subsystems link with each other, either because of intertwining tasks or common ideologies, we see common language, values, priorities, and potential for political power (Marshall & Scribner,1991, p. 352).

Implications for the education of school administrators are enormous. Marshall (1992) asserts that

> ...the field of educational administration maintains - in professional preparation, bureaucratic structures, and selection and socialization - a professional culture that still pretends neutral technical competence and avoids controversy (p. 382).

The uncertainty and conflict inherent in organizations as political entities require that school administrators develop not only traditional management and technical skills, but also micropolitical skills in negotiation and bargaining, problem analysis and problem solving, decision making, and symbolic acts such as those expressed in language. Language is a powerful tool in exercising micropolitical influence since how ideas are expressed in conversation and debate often shapes how the ideas are perceived (Pfeffer, 1992), and by implication, how the speaker is seen as well. If gender impacts communication, both verbal and nonverbal, as this research indicates, then language may differ in meaning when expressed by males or by females. In turn, males and females may listen to the same words, but hear them differently (Tannen, 1990). If this is the case, then schools of administration should include in any course training in language perception and delivery.

Schools of education and professional development institutions serving practicing administrators and teachers would do well to focus on understanding and developing verbal and nonverbal micropolitical communication skills. In their research both Goodlad (1984) and Sizer (1984) have explored ways in which administrators and teachers can potentially share both responsibility and power in public schools. Sharing a common language would go far toward that end if it were employed as the administrators in this study have employed it, in diffusion of micropolitical conflict and building of affiliations and coalitions. Implications for the act of supervision are similarly important when gender difference is part of the relationship.

School districts hiring administrators, and administrators seeking positions would do well to develop an understanding of language with which to examine verbal and nonverbal micropolitical communication as an expression of the values and administrative practices each employs. Such a practice would contribute toward matching or coordinating individual styles and aptitudes with emerging organizational

styles and requirements for coalitions and collaborative decision making. This could open possibilities for increased success and improved performance both individually and institutionally.

Recommendations for Further Research

Because of the limited number of subjects available for this research the study should be replicated among other female school principals until a substantial body of data exists relative to female public school principals. In addition, female principals from other demographic groups should be examined, including those representative of differences in age, race, geographic location, school district size, and cultural and educational backgrounds, with the eventual goal of constructing a theory of micropolitical communication behavior. An examination of the variables surrounding the various verbal and nonverbal cues employed by the female principals might further illuminate female micropolitical behavior.

A consideration of women before and after certain critical life stages or psychologically developmental events might reveal effects on micropolitical behaviors. The questions raised related to aggression and its negative connotation among the females studied point toward further investigation of female attitudes toward aggressive leadership styles and techniques, and social perceptions of these styles and their impacts on organizations such as schools.

Comparative studies with male principals of similar demographic descriptions should be conducted to help determine the extent to which described micropolitical communication behaviors are gender or context specific. A cautionary note in this regard is that a focus merely on existence of gender similarities and differences may conceal a lack of significance between the two. One interesting approach to this research might be to employ both male and female researchers in the same setting

and examine possible differences in the perspectives and observations of each.

Another potentially fruitful approach to the study of micropolitical communication behaviors of female principals would be to replicate the study from different perspectives. The perspectives of teachers, or of parents might potentially reveal a different body of information. The technical addition of increased videotaping would broaden the data base as well.

Further study of the micropolitical strategies and accompanying tactics employed by female principals in regard to their effectiveness, and the role of personal skills in the process would extend the current study and have implications for administrative training programs for practitioners. In turn, a current survey of the curricula and instructional methods of administrative training programs for school administrators would provide graduate schools with information related to program development.

The overriding conclusion derived from this research has been that the apparently successful micropolitical communications of these three principals derived from their expressions of genuine caring for both their institutions and the persons within them. As individuals these principals consistently examined their own motivations and goals in light of what was most beneficial to their schools. By their example, through verbal and nonverbal micropolitical communication behaviors, they built and sustained trust.

Table 1
Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Categories and Descriptors

Subject A	Subject B	Subject C
Verbal communication 1. Listening techniques: um umm, right, okay 2. Vocabulary: positive, motion words, qualifiers, colloquialisms 3. Usage: finishes for others, incomplete phrases, incorrect words 4. Humor: general, self-directed, facetious	Verbal communication 1. Listening techniques: um umm, okay, right 2. Vocabulary: positive, qualifiers, complimentary 3. Usage: fillers, signals, filters negatives 4. Humor: general, self-directed, teasing, problem-directed	Verbal communication 1. Listening techniques: um umm, okay, uh huh 2. Vocabulary: positive, appreciative 3. Usage: questioning, metaphors, correct 4. Humor: self/other-directed, collegial
Nonverbal communication 1. Conservative, businesslike appearance 2. Standing, control position 3. Hands in motion 4. Eye contact, concerned expression, head high 5. Body shifts, leans back, rapid motions, crosses legs	Nonverbal communication 1. Stylized feminine appearance 2. Seated, low power, proximity to listener 3. Hands clasped, open, expressive 4. Eye contact, glasses as signal, head nods 5. Crosses legs, sways, touches others	Nonverbal communication 1. Businesslike, soft appearance 2. Power position, next to conferee 3. Hand positions near face 4. Eye contact, glasses as signal, smiles 5. Body shifts, arms on chair back, crosses legs

Table 2
Micropolitical Strategies and Behaviors to Obtain Preferred Outcomes

Subject A	Subject B	Subject C
Micropolitical strategies 1. Organization 2. Interpersonal influence 3. Negotiation 4. Advocacy	Micropolitical strategies 1. Organization 2. Interpersonal influence 3. Environmental framing 4. Advocacy	Micropolitical strategies 1. Organization 2. Interpersonal influence 3. Environmental framing 4. Advocacy
Micropolitical behaviors 1. Planning, notetaking, time management 2. Team approach, personal involvement, positive approach, self awareness, professional networking 3. Change agent, mediation 4. Gender awareness, children, mentoring	Micropolitical behaviors 1. Planning, notetaking, time management 2. Team approach, personal involvement, positive approach, self awareness 3. Trustbuilding, intra-school coordination, caring, symbolism 4. Children, school	Micropolitical behaviors 1. Planning, notetaking, knowing policy, staff preparation 2. Team approach, personal involvement, positive approach, self awareness community networking 3. Injection of philosophy, personal preparation 4. Gender awareness, children, mentoring

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